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## WORD MADE FLESH

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Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Exodus 19:1-6; Romans 5:6-11; Matthew 9:36-10:8

### **The Call to be Priests of Creation\***

It was the third month since the flight from Egypt. Just long enough to lose ones fervour for freedom and acquire all the fears of the desert. Just long enough to doubt the significance of why one chose to leave the confines of the city, the bread and board and curious comfort of the home one made in a land of estrangement, a place of bondage.

We all have the capacity to make slavery our home.

But that was three months ago. Now those in the desert must deal with the sojourn, the wandering, the fears of the desert: its lack of orientation, its emptiness, and the threat of the loss of the necessities of life. So Moses goes up the mountain in that desert place and hears the seemingly ridiculous and impossible words, "You shall be my treasured possession...you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation."

Hold the image of this experience in your mind: loss of the comfort of a land of estrangement, a home of bondage; the fervour of freedom and the fear of the wilderness; the call to a vocation as a priestly people who will bless and heal those who dwell in lands of estrangement.

The Apostle Paul speaks of the spiritual foundation of the Christian's vocation. The God who cares, who is the lover of humankind, reaches into our world "while we were enemies." We, enemies? Enemies of God? All of us who make our home in the land of estrangement, who are comfortable with the bondage of life are the enemies of the God who is the lover of life and the lord of the fullness of creation. It is this condition of bondage to which the text speaks of God's wrath. When we are pitted against life we experience the very impulse of life turned in on itself. This is what the scripture means when it speaks of the wrath of the Creator. And it is to this condition that Christ comes "with healing in his wings" so that we may be reconciled to life.

All those who have been touched by this revelation, whose life has come out of the shadow of bondage into the fullness of the light of life, have taken the spiritual journey that leads to the recovery of the human vocation, the priestly vocation.

The Gospel reading offers us the image of compassion at the heart of the recovery of the priestly vocation. Jesus, seeing the crowd, is filled with compassion, because he sees that they are without spiritual leadership. Their religious leaders do not affirm the human struggle for freedom from all those forms of bondage which deprive us of the fullness of life. Their leaders, through their own experience, have not come to understand how the human nature can move through struggle with the sources of bondage into the freedom of the glorified life. They do not even see the possibility of a life in union with God.

Christ summoned his disciples (and you and me) to the vocation of priesthood, recovered at the very center of our nature. He calls us to go to those who are lost to themselves, lost to life itself, and lost to the God of life and proclaim the good news that the kingdom of God is near at hand. He calls them to cure the sick of heart, to raise those who are dead to life, to bless those who are cast out, and to cast out the demons that devour the capacity of the human being to walk fully in God's world. In today's readings, the spiritual meaning of having been reconciled -- brought back together -- to oneself, to life, and to the God of life, is also the vocation of God's people.

*David J. Goa*

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